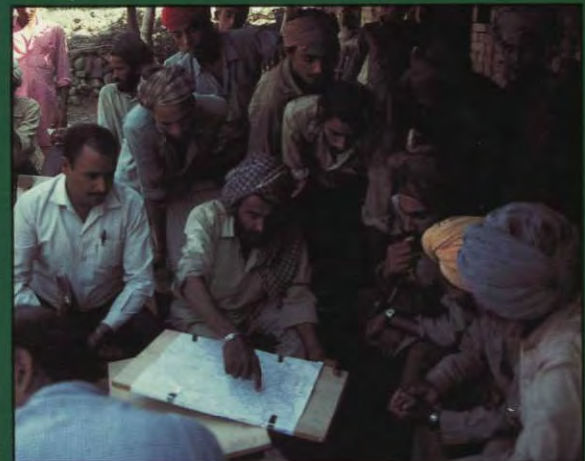


Communities and Forest Management



With Recommendations
to the
Intergovernmental Panel on Forests



IUCN Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest Management

IUCN
The World Conservation Union

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COMMUNITIES AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

A Report of the IUCN Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest Management

*with
Recommendations
to the*

Intergovernmental Panel on Forests

Edited by

Mark Poffenberger

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Mark Poffenberger, Coordinator
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IUCN Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest Management

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past two centuries the nationalization of much of the world's forests has eroded and alienated local community forest management systems in many nations. Forest departments, with limited financial and human resources, have experienced increasing problems ensuring the sustainable use of millions of hectares of land under their sole jurisdiction. Communities and indigenous peoples, with few legal rights or responsibilities over the public forest domain, have stood by, while witnessing the rapid commercial exploitation of the last half-century. Growing rural populations competing for poorly controlled forest resources are intensifying use pressures and accelerating deforestation. Yet as important forest product scarcities increase and conflicts mount over resource access at the end of the twentieth century, many communities around the world are taking action to stabilize these important forest environments.

One of the most promising emerging strategies is to promote sustainable forest management policies and programs that enable the active involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples in public forest use and protection. Each year more nations are approving initiatives that provide forest user groups with greater rights and responsibilities in the care of protected areas, upland watershed forests, production forests, and timber concessions. These actions mark a historic shift in world forest management policy and practice.

The case studies presented here, drawn from four continents, reveal a number of common experiences that have important implications for national and global policies:

- Communities are increasingly concerned over forest degradation and growing resource scarcities.
- Community members often distrust forestry department staff and are fearful that large private sector timber interests will further degrade already threatened and eroding natural forest resources.
- Communities are increasingly organizing and taking operational steps and political action to gain greater authority over local forest resources.
- Communities are building on traditional institutions and environmental values while integrating new planning skills and management practices in evolving forest protection systems.

- Forestry departments are under growing political and financial pressures to involve communities in public forest management.
- National policies and programs supporting community forest management initiatives are encouraging them to develop and spread.
- Community involvement in forest protection is leading to a stabilization of degraded ecosystems, enabling natural regeneration.
- In many countries, community involvement is proving to be a cost-effective, socially just, and environmentally sound approach to stabilizing natural forests.

Given the observable worldwide shift to policies and programs supportive of community involvement and decentralization in forest management, the question is often not whether this transition should take place, but how? The twenty-first century challenge is to facilitate a devolution of greater authority to forest-based communities while minimizing conflicts, and to support new partnerships among communities, government and the private sector to ensure the meeting of community needs, forest resource conservation and sustainable use. Clarifying forest use rights and responsibilities and creating adaptive policies and programs that allow for intensified access controls can lead to more sustainable forest management. This requires appropriate institutional arrangements that allow the shifting of authority over forest resources back in the direction of local forest-dependent community groups and indigenous peoples. Much work remains to be done to involve millions of small rural communities formally in the management of the world's forest ecosystems.

I INTRODUCTION

The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) provides an opportunity to move toward a global strategy for sustainable forest management. Many member nations are developing national strategies to achieve this goal through evolving policies and programs that extend greater authority to communities and indigenous peoples in managing forest resources. In early 1996, IUCN-The World Conservation Union began forming a Working Group to assist the IPF in formulating concrete recommendations to address the need for greater community involvement in forest management. The Working Group aspired to support the IPF by collecting and synthesizing some of the world's rapidly accumulating experiences with decentralized and participatory approaches to forest management and to assist country delegates in creating and strengthening regional and global initiatives. The Working Group is comprised of individuals with diverse national backgrounds and experiences with community forestry. Many IPF country delegates and NGO representatives, foresters, academicians, donor agency staff, and community leaders are contributing to the Working Group's ongoing efforts.

This Issues Paper describes the experiences of five nations on four continents, all developing policies and field operations which create new and stronger partnerships among government agencies, local communities and the private sector. The paper also highlights the challenges these nations face as they embark on an historic transition in public forest management. Emerging lessons generate a number of important recommendations for IPF consideration. The recommendations refer to some of the key Program Elements under consideration by the IPF. (See Appendix I)

Toward a Global Consensus on Sustainable Forest Management Through the IPF

International discussions of the state of the world's environment have occurred with growing frequency and focus in recent decades (see Figure 1). Global concern over deforestation has brought forest management issues to the forefront of many environmental debates, especially after the Earth Summit at Rio in 1992. Increasingly, international discussions reflect an emerging international consensus that greater community involvement in management is a key to stabilizing forest resources.

Based on Agenda 21, which emerged from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro, The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was mandated to monitor implementation of the UNCED commitments. The CSD was charged with seeking ways to implement a "non-legally binding authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests." In April 1995, during the CSD's third session, it was decided that an Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) would be formed to address the international policy and political debate on forests, including implementation of the Forest Principles.

The IPF is authorized to meet four times and hold a series of intersessional meetings, making a final report to the CSD in 1997. The panel is open to all interested countries. Nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and representatives of major groups accredited to the CSD may participate as observers. It is hoped that the panel will make substantive progress toward international consensus on ways to improve national forest policies and development strategies and improve the coordination and quality of international cooperation. The panel also faces the challenging task of improving understanding regarding the environmental implications of forest harvesting and trade.

TABLE 1 **Timeline of Major Events in Global Forest Policy Dialogue****Pre-Rio Earth Summit**

- 1948** IUCN formed to promote international cooperation for the conservation of nature.
- 1972** UN Stockholm Conference highlights threats to the biosphere, including acid rain, stratospheric ozone depletion, deforestation, desertification, and biodiversity loss.
- 1982** Bruntland Commission Report requires sustainable development meet the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations.
- 1985** Tropical Forest Action Plan (TFAP) process initiated by FAO, UNDP, the World Bank, and WRI in effort to establish national programs for sustainable forest utilization.
- 1986** International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) established. ITTO agrees in 1994 to ensure that by 2000 all tropical timber export is from sustainably managed forests.
- 1991** World Bank issues Forest Policy Paper stressing sustainable and conservation-oriented forestry responsive to local communities.

The Earth Summit and Post-Rio

- 1992** UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro addresses global environmental problems. Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) created to implement Agenda 21, including the Forest Principles in Chapter 11 endorsing the role of local communities, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders.
- 1993** The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) becomes effective as a legal treaty, encouraging conservation, equitable benefit-sharing, and sustainable forest use.
- 1993** ITTO adopts Guidelines on the Conservation of Biological Diversity in Tropical Production Forests, calling for national policy requiring consultation with forest dwellers.
- 1993** Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) established. Principles and Criteria adopted in 1995 recognizing legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own and manage their forests.
- 1993** Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) created making community forestry policy and field research a core thematic area.
- 1994** World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development (WCFSD) launched to develop a global vision for forests in the twenty-first century. Policy dialogue intends to involve local communities.
- 1995** Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) initiated by CSD to seek a global consensus for action supportive of participatory and sustainable forest management.

II FOREST MANAGEMENT TRANSITIONS

Throughout much of the world, the destruction of natural forests for timber, cropland, fuelwood, pasture, urbanization, and commercial industry has had a profound impact on rural communities. The deterioration of the earth's extensive forests has exposed critical watersheds, accelerated topsoil erosion and sedimentation of rivers and reservoirs, exacerbated flooding, and overtaxed the land's natural resilience and capacity to regenerate and sustain its productive functions. Attempts to tighten bureaucratic controls over national forests have often led only to heightened conflict among users and further assault on the ecosystem, rather than conservation and sustainable use.

Communities in nations of both the North and South are increasingly vocal in resisting attempts by outside industries to log their forests. From Surinam to the Solomon Islands, in India, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Ghana, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Panama, Ecuador, the United States, Canada and many other nations, concerns over deforestation have led communities to organize public demonstrations, block logging roads, and make appeals to political representatives and judicial systems to halt deforestation and forest degradation.

Most rural communities have no alternative but to live with their environments and consequently have a large stake in their sustained management. In contrast, private-sector interests can always shift their investments elsewhere, while government officers are rotated every few years. Given the growing political voice of rural people, they will likely increasingly demand and receive more active roles in promoting sustainable forest management in coming decades. Fortunately, forest-dependent communities are often the best positioned logistically to develop and impose the intensified use controls needed to sustain natural forest ecosystems as they come under increasing pressure in the twenty-first century. Recognizing the environmental concerns of rural communities and supporting their efforts to protect threatened forests and regenerate degraded ones may be the most important, least costly strategy available to national governments and donors alike.

The History of Deforestation and Forest Management

The twentieth century has seen an unravelling of much of the global forest estate. The struggle for forest resource control among politicians, private business interests, government agencies, and local communities is a persistent, all too common theme in many developing and developed countries, bridging the North and the South. Newspaper exposés that describe how bureaucrats under political pressure awarded logging rights to contractors and multinational companies at heavily subsidized prices are as prevalent in the United States as in India or Indonesia. Across nations and borders, similarities among the intricate issues of forest management are no coincidence. The problems are deeply rooted in the historical processes through which state forestry institutions evolved over the last century. They reflect concepts of bureaucratic centralization in resource governance, authoritative legislative strategies, and management attitudes and practices that have been borrowed from the temperate, industrialized world and widely adopted in many less developed tropical countries. The current global crisis in forest management is profoundly embedded in the past. It will be certain to endure far into the

future unless societies and their institutions can better understand the lessons of the past and act upon them.

The forces driving deforestation are complex. There is an urgent need to understand the relationships between resource degradation and social unrest that threaten both the environment and the world's social and economic stability. Many forest ecosystems have suffered from extensive, successive disturbances over the past century. Today their existence is threatened.

Statistics concerning rates of deforestation are misleading. They imply that forests are either present or gone. Although some forests do disappear abruptly through clear-felling or devastating fires, most forest ecosystems instead suffer a process of degradation. This occurs through a series of human interventions and natural events that result from a lack of management controls. Often responsibility for deforestation is cast on a single user group, be it loggers, swidden farmers, or women fuelwood headloaders, yet more often there are multiple actors involved in disturbing the same tract of forest at different points in time. Hundreds of millions of hectares of forest land are overexploited through selective logging, illegal cutting, grazing, migrant farming, and fire. Much of the planet's forests are "ratcheting down" biologically as they lose biomass, diversity and topsoil, eroding their complex structural and functional integrity.

Attempted solutions to the problems of deforestation are often misguided and ineffective. Too commonly they are defined in terms of capital investments, state-of-the-art technologies, and enhancement of modern professional capacities. Yet the huge foreign investments and new technological strategies of past decades have had relatively little impact, as witnessed by unabated rates of forest degradation. A recent World Bank report noted, after the bank had spent \$1.5 billion on forestry projects in Asia between 1979 and 1990, "the Bank's investments have had a negligible impact on borrower's forestry sectors as a whole."²

Forest management systems that have evolved since the nineteenth century colonial era are still largely premised on models of unilateral, centralized state control. Public forest lands cover anywhere from 25 to 75 percent of many countries' total land areas. Currently, most governments still possess sole legal rights to virtually all of their natural forests. Forest agencies entrusted with the protection of these lands face growing human resource and capital constraints as public-sector budgets fall during economic restructuring. Remaining staff, many of whom are office-bound, are heavily burdened with administrative duties. Despite their limited field time, they are responsible for monitoring the forest use of millions of rural inhabitants and migrants, as well as that of logging concessionaires and livestock permittees. The ongoing failure to stem forest degradation in many nations indicates that forest departments alone are simply incapable of such an unrealistic mandate. With the rapid expansion of human populations and the transformation of national politics and economies, the world has changed dramatically. Rural communities and indigenous peoples in many countries have growing political

power to demand rights to manage the local forest resources upon which they depend. Elected political representatives are gaining influence under emerging local governance systems and are attempting to respond to the concerns of the village constituencies.

Current Challenges and Opportunities for Community Involvement

Donors, planners, foresters, social scientists, and NGO leaders around the world increasingly acknowledge the need for community participation in public forest lands management. The emerging consensus that local people should play a greater role in management decision-making bridges national boundaries and the political blocs of the countries of the North and South. In many parts of the world the need for collaborative management is no longer questioned. Attention is now given to developing processes that facilitate transitions in policies and operations. Because the public forest domain is classified to reflect a diversity of management objectives, broadly including timber and other forest product generation, watershed protection, and strict nature conservation, it is difficult to come up with uniform guidelines regarding how participation should occur. In addition, community forest usufruct and tenurial rights, informal management practices, and institutions vary widely. Finally, the national political and economic environments are varied, presenting different opportunities and obstacles in developing participatory policies and programs. Nonetheless, some generic approaches to supporting more active roles for local communities are rapidly attracting a growing following among nations and across regions. As a recent participant in the FAO Email Conference on Collaborative Forest Management, stated:

The whole notion of joint forest management, which has swept through India and revolutionized the way people think about forests, and is now spreading to Africa, was unthinkable 15 years ago.³

Throughout the world, resident communities use and manage their forests in diverse ways, and forest use rights and management responsibilities vary widely, depending on historical factors, social and political contexts, and national policies. It is useful to identify major contexts and strategies in which communities are involved in forest management. It should be noted that these categories are not exclusive, but overlap one another and may be found in production forest, watershed protection, and nature conservation contexts.

III DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND A COMMON TERMINOLOGY

For thousands of years, communities around the world have accumulated experience using and managing natural ecosystems. Social institutions often evolved to ensure the sustainable use of these resources. These management systems are part of our human heritage and reflect the earth's remarkable cultural diversity.

Alongside these community institutions, over the past decades, many nations developed government agencies, including forest departments, state forest enterprises, and watershed boards to manage public forests, often allowing little or no community recognition or participation in decision-making. Private timber firms holding public forest use lease rights treated local communities as little more than a source for manual labor. In recent years, greater attention has been given to the diverse roles communities are playing as forest protectors and production managers.

A significant number of the world's forests are still utilized by local communities relying on both traditional and emerging management institutions. Because they are often village organizations, often unregistered, and fall outside formal policies and prescriptions, they have been the hidden component of management. The communities' roles may extend from passive engagement to active participation in goal identification, objective setting, controlling implementation, and assessing results. In some areas community involvement and authority may be comprehensive, based on granted legal autonomy or simple isolation. A definition of community involvement in forest management therefore spans a range of conditions from participation in decision-making and access to resume legal authority for management control.

Diverse Approaches – Emerging Parallels

National policy reorientations providing greater community involvement in the forest sector reflect both strong parallels and unique innovation. India is currently emphasizing the recognition of small hamlet communities as partners with the forest department in the joint management of degraded forests. Many African nations are exploring ways to involve communities in the collaborative management of protected areas and national wildlife parks. Canada, Panama, Andean countries and the Philippines are all exploring policy and legal mechanisms to reach agreements with aboriginal and tribal peoples to establish indigenous forest territories with varying degrees of autonomy. This wide range of experience is all part of the domain of community involvement in forest lands management, as shown in Figure 2.

Many national governments are developing strategies to establish partnerships with forest

communities, negotiate new resource use agreements, and otherwise involve them in forest conservation and production. A number of approaches designed for varying social and management situations are being used around the world. Short descriptions are provided in Figure 3.

Despite the diversity of management goals, policies and operational approaches to community engagement, countries face the same fundamental challenges of reorienting relevant agencies, opening communications, and negotiating new agreements with local peoples. In most nations, new forest management policies are being developed to respond to the need for increasing communication involvement in a wide range of contexts.

After a century of growing state control over the world's natural forests and decades of boom and bust industrial timber exploitation, bringing communities back into the management picture appears not only inevitable, but also critically important to the sustainable management of these threatened ecosystems. Community-based organizations in many nations are rapidly developing capacity to manage forests, including developing technical staff. NGOs often play a supportive, facilitating role in ongoing forest management transitions. In other countries, aboriginal, indigenous, tribal, and resident forest communities are gaining political power through electoral and judicial processes. After seeing their forest rights eroded over past centuries, these communities are demanding that past injustices be addressed and their historic claims on natural resources be recognized. Their demands are supported by (UNCED) outcomes, including Chapter 26 of Agenda 21, the Biodiversity Convention and the International Guiding Principles on Forests, which have recognized the importance of forests to indigenous peoples and emphasized the need to strengthen their role in natural resource management.

FIGURE 1 Spectrum of Community Involvement in Forest Management

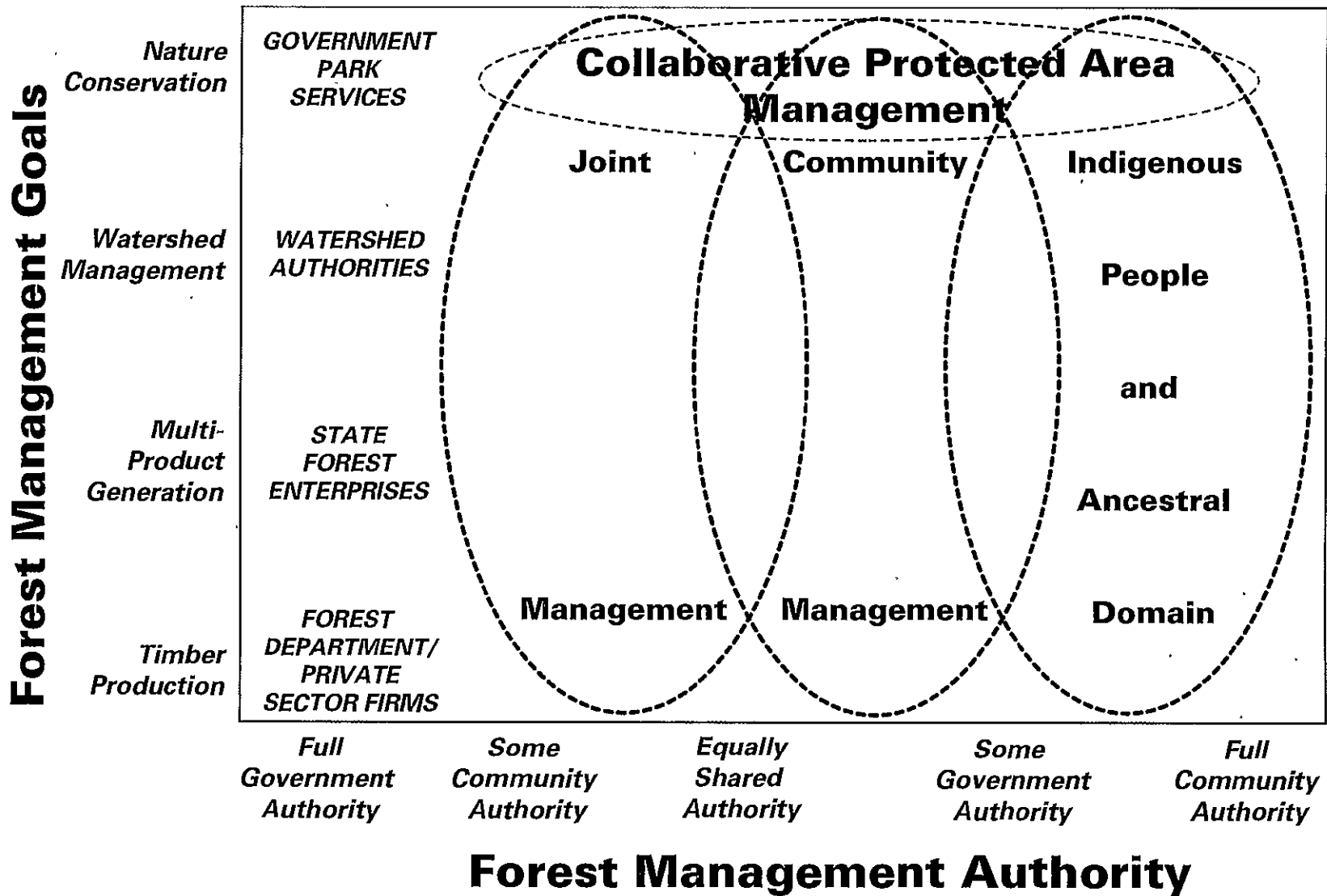


TABLE 2 Major Approaches to Community Involvement in Forest Management

Indigenous People and Ancestral Domain. Some nations have significant populations of indigenous peoples who claim lands and forests considered to be ancestral domain. Indigenous peoples are using judicial processes to reestablish or gain greater rights over these resources. An increasing number of countries in the North and South are giving greater recognition to these claims, carrying out negotiations, and often transferring authority for public forests back to indigenous peoples. The role of governments, NGOs, and other outside groups and stakeholders varies widely from no involvement to active support, depending on national policies and management needs.

Community Forest Management (CFM). CFM broadly describes local residents who have developed institutions, norms, rules, fines and fees to sustain forest resources. CFM systems characteristically involve one or more communities protecting and using a specific forest area. While the forest may be under the legal jurisdiction of the community, county, state, or nation, community management groups strongly identify with the resource and perceive they have special rights and responsibilities for its management. While some governments or outside interests may be interacting with CFM groups, typically communities exert operational controls over access and use of the forest.

Joint Forest Management (JFM). Joint or co-management of forests can be broadly viewed as policy and program initiatives that allow governments, donors, private-sector interests, and NGOs to collaborate with communities in managing forest resources. The joint or collaborative element may vary, with communities having more or less decision-making authority relative to government and other interests. JFM systems are most commonly found in public forest land contexts, where community participation is considered desirable by government and is encouraged through policies and programs.

Collaborative Protected Area Management. Although only 5 percent of the world's forests have been designated as national parks and conservation areas, frequently these areas possess indigenous inhabitants or are populated on the periphery by agricultural and pastoral communities that are forest users. In the past, many governments imposed strict controls on park use, including resettling resident peoples and limiting the access of bordering communities, often generating conflicts between government managers and resident populations. Nature conservation planners and administrators in many nations are now seeking ways to involve resident people in developing new collaborative management systems for conservation areas or integrated conservation and development programs.

IV LEARNING FROM THE GLOBAL EXPERIENCE: COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Around the world many nations are experimenting with new ways to bring communities formally into the management of public forest lands. Emerging strategies in each country reflect different political environments, past historical relationships between governments and forest communities, and resource management goals and economic development needs. Despite this diversity, management transitions tend to follow a limited number of patterns. The following case studies are characteristic of some of the current fundamental approaches to community involvement in forest management.

India's Emerging Experiences with Joint Forest Management

Indian forest policies have undergone dramatic shifts over the past five years. For over a century policies emphasized the nationalization and commercial utilization of much of the country's forests. After independence in 1947, industrial use continued to receive priority, with millions of hectares leased to private-sector operators at subsidized rates. The forest rights and responsibilities of communities continued to erode after independence, as reflected in the National Forest Policy of 1952: "The accident of a village being situated close to a forest does not prejudice the right of the country as a whole to receive the benefits of a national asset."⁴

Policy changes began occurring in 1980 when growing concern over India's environment led the government to pass the Forest Conservation Act. The act placed substantial limitations on logging in natural forests, while stressing the ecological and social importance of these resources. While the act curbed the commercial utilization of forests, it suggested few operational strategies to stabilize the public forest domain beyond extensive plantation schemes.

During the 1980s, deforestation rates had reached alarming levels, with less than 10 percent of the nation possessing good forest cover. Subsistence forest products were becoming scarce among India's estimated 300 million rural resource users, while their rights and responsibilities were limited or nonexistent. The social forestry programs of the 1970s and 1980s had limited community participation to village and revenue lands, while failing to involve local user groups in the larger task of protecting public forests. Planners, foresters, researchers, and NGO leaders increasingly recognized that state forest departments were not able unilaterally to protect forest resources covering nearly 23 percent of the nation's land area.

Without waiting for supportive policies and judicial decisions, throughout the 1980s, thousands of communities began protecting their degrading forests, primarily in eastern India's tribal forest tracts.

Often with little or no outside help from government, NGOs, or donor programs, village leaders began recognizing the environmental crisis confronting them as their once densely forested hills were denuded. Communities formed hamlet-based forest protection groups and halted cutting and grazing, often initiating rapid regeneration of the natural forests.

The first national policy breakthrough occurred when the National Forest Policy was passed in 1988. "The Policy document envisages... that forest communities should be motivated to identify themselves with the development and protection of forests from which they derive benefits." In 1988 and 1989, the states of Orissa and West Bengal passed guidelines for the transfer of partial public forest management authority to forest communities. This was followed by a National Joint Forest Management resolution in June 1990, supporting the rights and responsibilities of forest communities in the management of public forests. Over the next six years, virtually all of India's states passed similar guidelines.

The Forest Protection Committees of Tangi, Orissa. By the mid-1980s, villagers in Tangi, Orissa (eastern India), and other communities in the Khurda Forest Division were so concerned by severe forest product scarcities and unfavorable microclimatic and hydrological changes arising from the desiccation of their forest that they began taking action. The people of Tangi are largely small farmers, landless laborers, and tribal families having some of the world's lowest per capita income. Adult men from many poor households are forced to migrate for 6 - 7 months each year, seeking employment in both rural and urban areas. Neighboring forests are critical for the population's survival. Forest products are essential for housing, food, fodder, fuel, medicine, agricultural tools, and cottage industries.

The history of deforestation around Tangi and the Khurda Forest Division of eastern Orissa mirrors a process occurring in many communities in rural India. In the 1950s and 1960s, increasingly scarce agricultural lands and growing populations put heavy pressure on forests, opening them for unsustainable cultivation. Implementing its timber production mandates, the state forest department gave logging rights to local concessions who often overexploited remaining forests on hill tracts surrounded by forest-dependent communities. By the mid-1980s, much of the forest land had been reduced to scrub. Due to its diminished commercial value, forest department protection declined. At the same time, communities lost confidence in the agency after it had repeatedly allowed outside contractors to fell local forests. Growing fuelwood scarcity drove the poorest, landless villagers to begin digging out remaining tree stumps and roots, allowing forest soils to be washed away by monsoon rains.

In response to growing environmental problems, village leaders from five neighboring communities began holding meetings in Tangi in 1985 to discuss how to preserve and restore their natural forests. In 1987, the communities agreed to form the Five-Village Forest Protection Committee. The

communities' ability to initiate collective action drew upon a tradition – jointly celebrating the rain god festival each year, as well as a more recent cooperative endeavor to establish a local middle school. The five communities' ability to control access and protect the degraded forest was enhanced by their close proximity to the resource and historic ties, and knowledge of the land.

Patrols of ten men, two from each village, began watching over the 840-hectare forest. Initially, each household contributed rice and volunteer labor to support the protection activities. Now the Forest Protection Committee generates revenues from a maturing cashew plantation and recovering bamboo grove. Rules framed through village meetings regulate use and stipulate fines for violators. Seasonal access rules are designed to facilitate monsoon regeneration and minimize fire danger during the hot, dry summer (see Box 1).

Box 1: Tangi Forest Protection Committee Decisions: 1987–1993

- Five Village Forest Protection Committee is formed
- Annual accounts are presented at village assembly
- Ten-person patrols work with the forest guard
- Members of participating villages agree to abide by the rules; offenders are subject to fines and sanctions
- Village members agree to support the patrol
- If a patrol member takes a bribe, he loses his job
- Each household is allowed 100 bamboo poles per year
- Hunting is prohibited in the forest

Ten years of community forest protection have resulted in vigorous coppicing tree shoots and seed-based regeneration, which are renewing this mixed dry deciduous forest. Periodic forest cleaning and thinning is reducing fire danger, improving tree growth, and generating fuelwood. Bamboo is harvested on rotation.

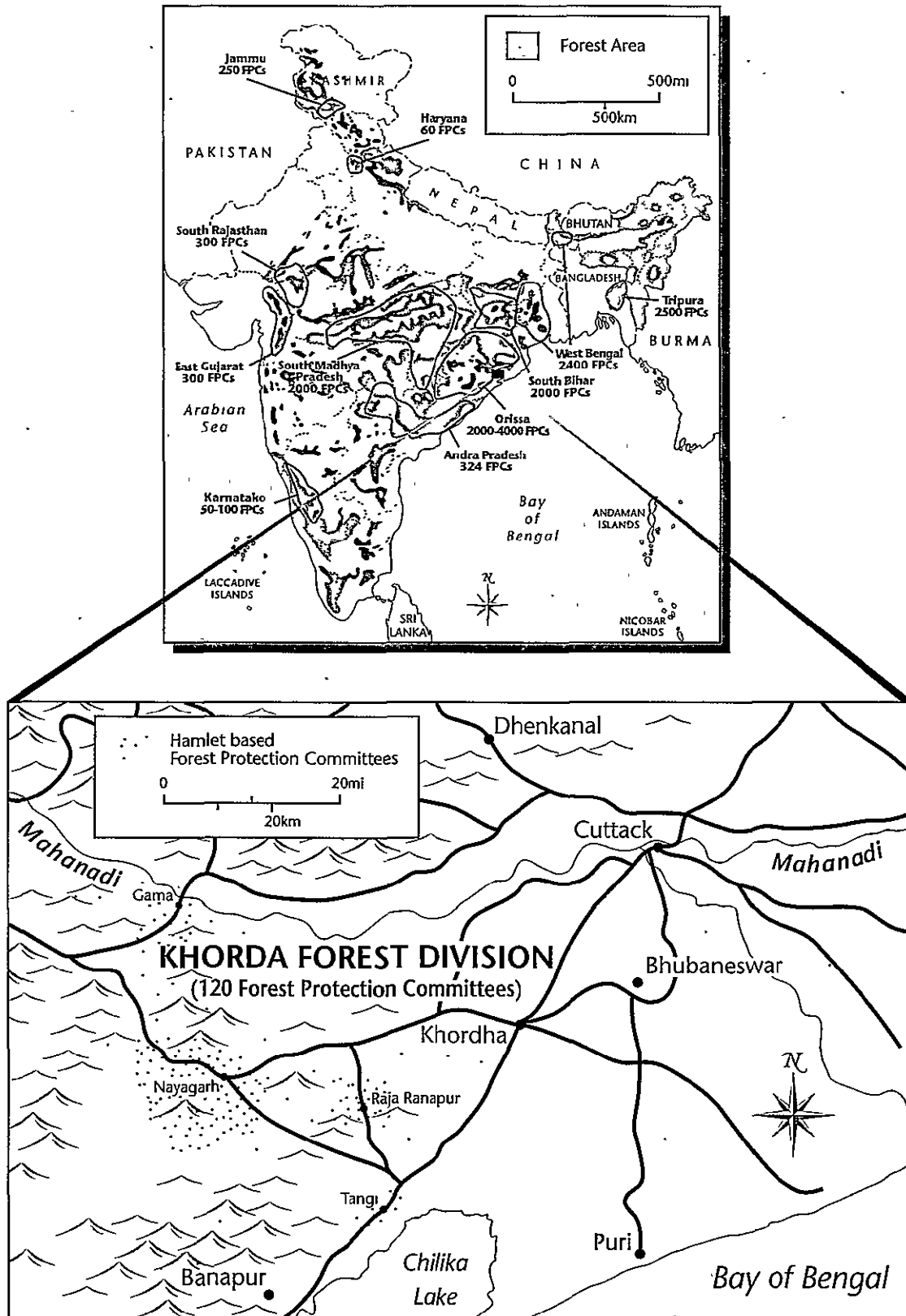
Over the past decade, 120 villages have joined the original five in the Kurdha Forest Division alone. Statewide, 4,000 communities currently protect over 250,000 hectares of vigorously regenerating mixed *Shorea robusta* forests. By 1996, between 10,000 and 15,000 communities across India have joined this grassroots forest protection movement with minimal cost to the government. In many areas, flora and fauna that had been disappearing from these habitats have begun to return.

Increasingly, forest department staff are learning how to work more effectively with community-based forest protection groups, though distrust remains on both sides. Emerging participatory policies and training programs have increased field staff confidence and capacity. NGOs are playing a

larger role in environmental education, training, dispute mediation, and forest product marketing support.

The regeneration of village forests is a critical element in sustaining and improving the quality of life for millions of rural families throughout Orissa, as well as other Indian states. India's experience indicates that a powerful force for environmental stabilization exists within many rural communities. However, the process of decentralizing public forest management and involving communities implies a reallocation of power. While forest regeneration may benefit all groups, conflicts are inherent in the redistribution of rights and responsibilities. Government, NGOs and village institutions need support to mediate and facilitate this process to minimize confrontations and the breakdown of these nascent resource management systems. As environmental problems grow, communities are responding, but they require supportive policies and programs to develop and spread. While the successful integration and support of diverse informal local problem-solving initiatives within national policies and programs remains a challenge, it is essential for the consolidation of this important management transition.

FIGURE 2 Map of India's Active Community Forest Protection Areas



Nepal's Evolving Community Forestry Policies

The first attempt to define a coherent forest policy in Nepal occurred in 1952/53, following the country's emergence from a feudal state. This recognized three categories of forest, including "community forests," which were to be set aside to satisfy community needs, and their protection and management was to be entrusted to village panchayats. This policy was never formalized or implemented, and it predated by 25 years subsequent attempts to implement a community forestry policy. During the intervening years Nepal's forest policy essentially followed models from the West, where forest ownership was vested in the State and management authority was placed in the hands of the Forest Department. The forests were nationalized in 1957, although the prime motive for this was to take back into state control the one third of all of Nepal's forest and agricultural lands, which were held under feudal tenure arrangements; 75% of it belonging to one family.

The Forest Department was charged with performing a policy and licensing role, but at the time, with only five or six professionally trained forest officers in the country, it was clearly an impossible task. The Forest Act, 1961 introduced into legislation the idea of transferring government forest land to village panchayats for their use. However, no steps were taken to implement these provisions and the legal status of the forests was not addressed for a further 15 years. Nonetheless, the attempt to recognize the legitimacy of local communities in having a role in forest management was important and it was built upon in later policy and legislative changes.

The Forest Preservation Act, 1967 was introduced to define forest offences and prescribe penalties, thus strengthening the role of the Forest Department as a policy and law enforcement agency. The first formal national Forestry Plan was promulgated in 1976 and this proposed the establishment of "Panchayat Forests" for the benefit of local communities. This was followed in 1978 by a set of rules and regulations to govern the handing over of limited areas of government forest land to the control of panchayats. Thus for the first time formal recognition was given to the rights of villagers to manage their own forest resources with technical assistance (where necessary) being provided by the Forest Department. A large number of field projects supported by both bilateral and multilateral donors began implementation during the late 1970s and 1980s. These accumulated considerable experience which was influential in shaping future policy and legislative changes. A major master planning exercise for the forestry sector was completed in 1990 and this indicated the strong emphasis which the government wished to give to community forestry. A number of very clear statements signalled the principles the government intended to follow in implementing community forestry:

The central role of the community in forest management was further emphasized in the forest sector master plan of 1990. Very clear statements signal the direction the government intends to follow in implementing community forestry:

- Phased handing over of all accessible hill forests to the communities to the extent that they are able and willing to manage them.

- ... to entrust users with the task of protecting and managing the forests. The users to receive all of the income...
- Retraining the entire staff of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation for their new role as advisers and extensionists.

It should not be presumed that because there were very few forest officers in the hill regions in the decade immediately following 1950, there was no interest in protection and management of the forests. While this presumption was (and is) widespread, the reality is somewhat different. Investigations during the past 15 years have revealed that a great many village communities took the situation into their own hands and put into place local institutional arrangements to ensure that many hill forests were given basic protection and that access and use rights were prescribed. It was after all, in their own best interests to do so. Many of these indigenous management systems have survived, often with modifications, for more than 35 years – not perfectly, but with outcomes better than could be achieved by a fledgling Forest Department.

Current approaches to community forestry attempt to bring these two strands of interest (the official and community) together, with each recognizing the interests and the ability of the other. During the past decade about 4,000 agreements covering almost 200,000 ha of forest have been negotiated between local village user groups and the Forest Department, and formalized as Operational Plans. These legitimize the authority of user groups to manage specified areas of forests.⁵

Participatory Planning and Ancestral Domain in Canada

Canada is the largest exporter of forest products in the world. The province of British Columbia, which accounts for half of the nation's total production, harvests and reforests 200,000 hectares of forest annually out of a total forest land base of 45 million hectares.

The Canadian constitution gives the primary responsibility for lands and resources to the provincial governments. Consequently the government of British Columbia oversees management of all provincial public or "Crown" lands, including those identified as traditional territories of aboriginal First Nations, and authorizes their use for logging, mining, recreation, grazing, and other activities. The role of the federal government in public forest land management is largely confined to formulating broad forest management guidelines, representing Canada in international discussions, and supporting research and interprovincial exchanges and coordination.

In recent years, concerns over the sustainability of past forestry practices, environmental health, and the rights of aboriginal people and other forest-dependent communities, combined with shrinking

government budgets, have driven a rethinking of forestry and environmental policies. The budget of the Canadian Forest Service has been cut by one-third in recent years. In some provinces, budgetary constraints have resulted in staff cuts and efforts to reduce the role of government in field management. Many provinces are exploring ways to share forest management with community groups and private-sector interests.

There are 603 separate aboriginal First Nations in Canada. Many of these, particularly in British Columbia, have traditional territories which cover thousands, and often hundreds of thousands, of hectares and include large areas of productive forest lands. In recent years, both the federal and provincial governments have shown increasing recognition for the rights of aboriginal people and have increased the roles of aboriginal and other local communities in forest management. Many provinces and corporations are developing "co-management" agreements with aboriginal groups. Canada's 1992 National Forest Strategy identifies aboriginal participation as one of the indicators of sustainable forest management.

Treaty-Making and Aboriginal Rights. Canada has historically clarified issues of aboriginal rights and title with First Nations by negotiating treaties regarding the use of lands and resources. Aboriginal rights of original occupancy were recognized by the British in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which helped guide relations between settlers and aboriginal people in eastern Canada during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Recent court decisions have confirmed that aboriginal rights are protected under Canada's constitution. In 1973, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that aboriginal title is rooted in the "long-time occupation, possession and use" of traditional territories. The Canadian constitution (1982) recognizes and affirms the concept of aboriginal rights. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 1990 that aboriginal people have a right to fish for food, ceremonial, and societal purposes. Canadian legal decisions have underscored the need for governments to resolve land and resource disputes with aboriginal First Nations through negotiations rather than litigation.

Aboriginal Rights in British Columbia. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British Crown negotiated treaties across what is now eastern and central Canada. In British Columbia, however, the treaty process was never completed, leaving the question of aboriginal rights unresolved for over a century. In 1992, British Columbia, in cooperation with Canada and aboriginal First Nations, created the independent British Columbia Treaty Commission to oversee a voluntary process for negotiating fair treaties to clarify aboriginal rights and address the social, environmental, and economic concerns of all parties. The underlying purpose of the treaty-making is to exchange undefined aboriginal rights for defined treaty rights. The treaty process is open to all First Nations in British Columbia.

Recent court decisions have provided a modern context for the negotiation of treaties and the

protection of aboriginal rights in British Columbia. In 1993, the British Columbia Court of Appeal ruled that First Nations people have unextinguished non-exclusive aboriginal rights, other than rights of ownership or property rights within their traditional territory. Ongoing treaty negotiations with the Nisga'a in the northwest corner of the province and the Nuuchahnulth of Clayoquot Sound are informative.

Nisga'a Agreement in Principle. There are 160,000 aboriginal people in British Columbia, out of a total population of 3.6 million. Since the British Columbia Treaty Commission was created, 47 First Nations representing 70 percent of the aboriginal population living on reserve have expressed their desire to negotiate a comprehensive modern treaty, with a number already engaged in negotiations.

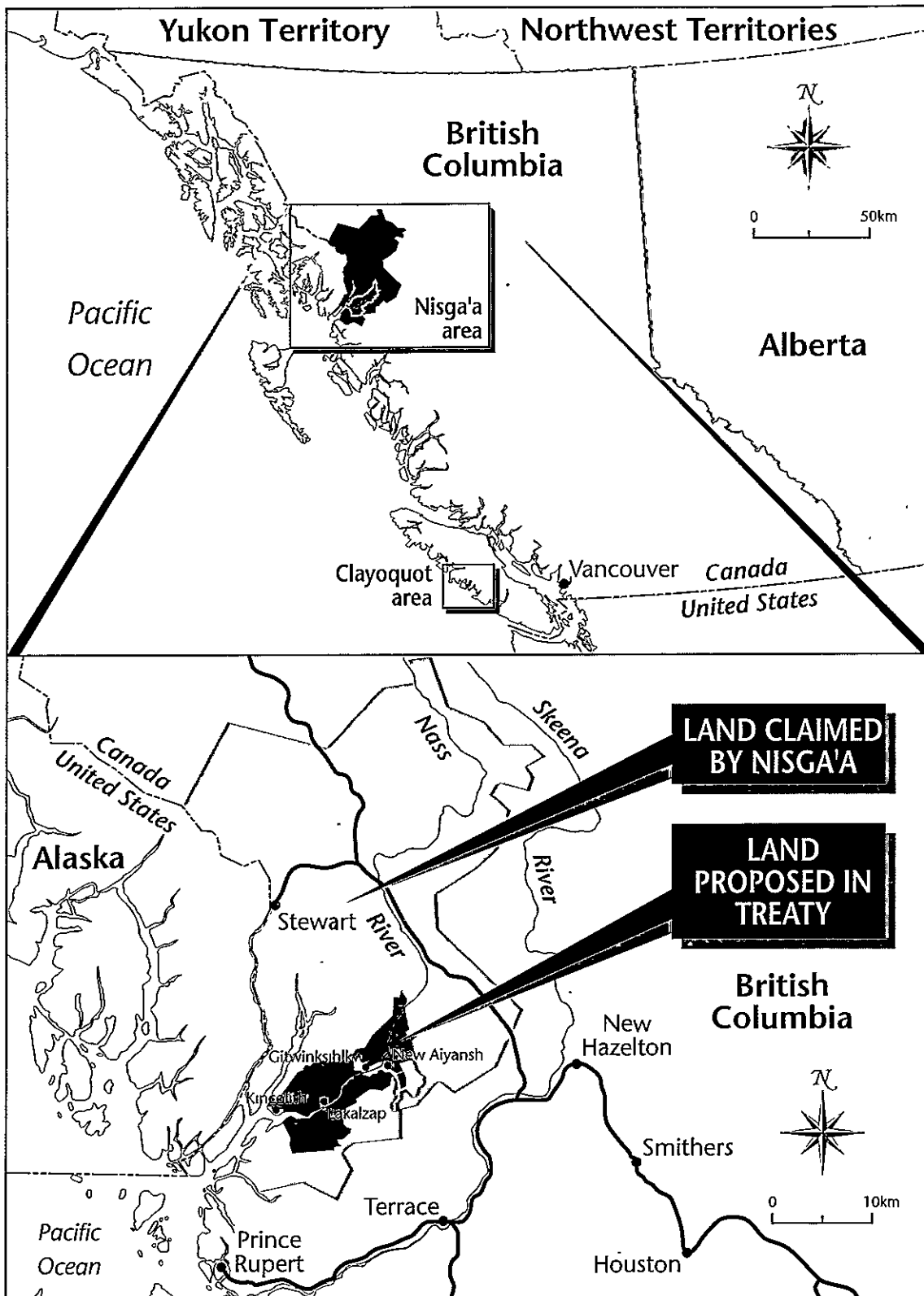
In February 1996, British Columbia, Canada, and the Nisga'a Tribal Council signed an agreement in principle that will form the basis for the Province's first modern treaty. It calls for a CDN \$190 million payment to the Nisga'a and the establishment of a Nisga'a Central Government with ownership and self-government over 745 square miles of land in the Nass River Valley, approximately 8 percent of the original area claimed by the First Nation (see Figure 5).

Under the agreement, the Nisga'a will manage all forest resources in their domain according to provincial standards. In addition, the Nisga'a will be allowed to purchase timber licenses in the area up to 150,000 cubic meters. The province will continue to manage three conservation areas in or bordering Nisga'a territory. The agreement also entitles the Nisga'a to receive 18 percent of the Nass River's salmon catch, as well as an allocation for sockeye and pink salmon and other non-salmon species. In return, the Nisga'a will be responsible for the stewardship of the Nass River fisheries. While environmental protection standards on Nisga'a land will be set by the tribal government, standards must meet or exceed those set by the federal or provincial government.

To prepare for tribal management of land, timber, and fishery resources, the Nisga'a initiated a mapping project in 1982, to strengthen their claim to coastal fisheries during discussions with the federal government. Maps indicating clan-based fishing areas and harvesting rights were prepared. This knowledge is held by each traditional house *wilp*. The tribal council maintains an archive of eight volumes of mapped place names and territories, including an atlas of Nisga'a-owned territories.⁶ Canada, British Columbia, and the Nisga'a Tribal Council will negotiate a final treaty settlement after all three parties have ratified the agreement in principle.

Interim Measures Agreement in Clayoquot Sound. The traditional territories identified to date by First Nations in British Columbia encompass most of the province, and many of them overlap. To suspend land-based activities such as logging until land claim negotiations are concluded would likely cause

FIGURE 5 Nisga'a and Nuu-chah-nulth Case Areas, British Columbia



economic ruin and social disruptions for all communities. The provincial government has pledged instead to ensure economic and social stability for all communities during these treaty negotiations. The government and some First Nations have negotiated pre-treaty interim measures agreements which encourage aboriginal and other communities to co-operate in identifying, conserving, and enhancing resources in traditional territories.

In March 1994, the government of British Columbia signed such an interim measures agreement with the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, representing the aboriginal First Nations of Clayoquot Sound, an area on the west coast of Vancouver Island (see Figure 5). The agreement fosters new economic opportunities for First Nations in forestry, tourism, and other businesses. It establishes a cooperative forest to be jointly managed by the First Nations and the forest industry for sustainable timber production and other values. Funding has recently been provided for developing First Nation management skills through a grant of \$4.5 million.

The interim measures agreement also establishes a joint management board to oversee land use and resource management decisions. Through this board, the First Nations have a direct voice in the management of resources within their traditional territories. The board is reviewing strategic and operational forestry plans which set out the standards and conditions for timber harvesting in the area. It is empowered to review and recommend modifications to any specific harvesting or road-building application. According to Chief Francis Frank of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations:

This process provides a chance to begin reconciliation of historic injustices against aboriginal peoples. . . . First Nations aspirations are to conserve resources for future generations. The only way resources can be conserved in Clayoquot Sound is if everyone works together and begins the process of reconciling our differences. We think this agreement provides that opportunity.⁷

Chief Frank has expressed his hope that the creation of well-managed resource-use systems will help reduce unemployment rates, currently as high as 70 percent, while restoring streams and forest areas damaged by past practices. Under the two-year agreement an annual harvest of up to 60,000 cubic meters of timber was authorized for 1994 and 1995. In April 1995, the Nuu-chah-nulth and the governments of Canada and British Columbia began public negotiation toward a comprehensive treaty settlement.

Respecting Aboriginal Rights in the Pre-Treaty Environment. British Columbia has a Protection of Aboriginal Rights Policy, which came into effect in 1995. The policy provides guidance and direction to forestry agency staff working with First Nations when forest management activities are proposed in areas where aboriginal rights may exist. It is forest ministry policy that all initial forest management

activities which directly affect the land be referred to First Nations. Consultation among First Nations, government, and third parties has proven to be the most effective way to ensure the protection of aboriginal rights during forest development and planning activities.

The provincial forest agency is also helping to resolve forestry-related issues with First Nations by encouraging their active participation in forest resource planning. The establishment of formal treaty agreements with the First Nations of British Columbia is likely to unfold gradually over the next two to three decades.

Indigenous Territorial Forest Management in Panama

During the 1960s and 1970s, Central America experienced the highest deforestation rates in the world. In 1850, Panama possessed dense forest cover on nearly 92 percent of its land area totaling 7.2 million hectares. By 1947, this had declined to 5.2 million hectares, falling further to 2.7 million hectares by 1992. Currently, deforestation claims an estimated 50,000 hectares annually with projections indicating that only 10 percent of the country will possess good secondary or primary forests by the year 2000. While nearly 2.5 million hectares have been designated national parks and reserves, these forests are under mounting pressure.

Prior to the entrance of corporate agricultural investments in Central America in the early twentieth century, most peasants practiced long rotation shifting cultivation, which was relatively-sustainable when person-land ratios and consumer demands were low. Indigenous peoples occupied the more remote forest areas, hunting, gathering, and farming to meet subsistence needs. The corporate development of banana, coffee, cotton, and sugar estates displaced local peasant communities, often placing greater pressure on marginal remaining forest land.

Eighty years of operations by U.S. logging companies drove the clearing of substantial tracts of forest, especially on the Caribbean coast. Poor logging practices, combined with the establishment of access roads, has allowed a rapid influx of migrants, greatly accelerating deforestation in commercially exploited areas. The expansion of cattle ranching has fueled forest clearing and reduced the labor absorptive capacity of those lands. Aside from the marginalization of peasant farmers, the commercialization of agriculture is also causing an increasingly inequitable accumulation of land resources among the wealthy minority. This, combined with the rapid rural demographic expansion, has created a large pool of underemployed, many of whom find that their best survival option is to exploit remaining forest through unsustainable farming practices or fuelwood collection.⁸

Indigenous peoples have struggled to maintain their forests against an onslaught of displaced migrants, agribusiness operators, and logging companies. While in some Central American countries Indian communities have been forced to flee their forest lands or have been massacred by outsiders or

the military, organized protests and political actions have generated some positive results. In Panama, indigenous peoples comprise nearly 8 percent of the population, representing 181,000 persons. Often living in remnant forest areas, they serve as the final buffer against the clearing of these complex ecosystems. Attempts by indigenous peoples to protect their forests are also a final effort to conserve their own cultures and identities, long under stress from outside social, economic and political forces. Fortunately, in Panama indigenous peoples are still present in many of the remaining old growth forests (see Figure 6).

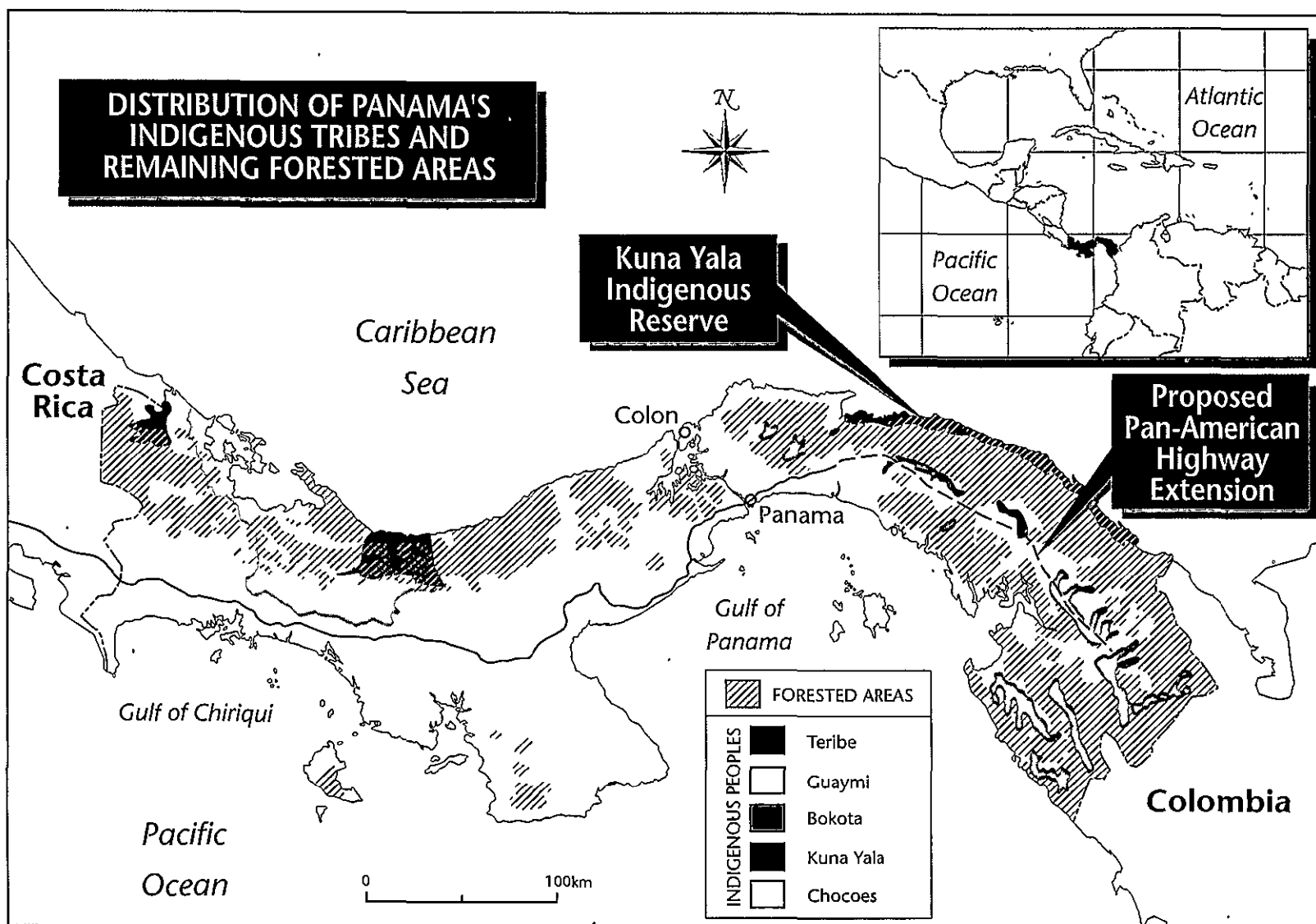
A systematic policy environment supportive of community forest protection has not yet emerged in Panama. Until 1994, earlier forest policies facilitated the work of timber concessionaires and failed to ensure sustainable forest use by communities. While new policies vaguely recognize indigenous peoples' rights, they fail to allow adequate community participation in forest resource decision-making. Yet some indigenous peoples like the Kuna, due to their strong communal organizations and representation in urban centers, have pushed through legislation that gives them greater autonomy over their ancestral lands in San Blas county. Unfortunately, the ancestral domain rights of the largest indigenous populations of Ngobe and Bugle and many smaller scattered groups remain unrecognized because of the competing interests of landowners, cattlemen, and mining concerns. In recent years, an emerging political coalition comprised of indigenous peoples and international conservation groups has put pressure on government to establish protected forest areas and national parks under indigenous and local community control.

Kuna Yala Indigenous Reserve. The Kuna Yala Indians of Panama demonstrate how one indigenous group has helped protect forest resources through local actions. After a long history of conflict with the government, including an armed revolt in 1925, the Kuna were granted relative autonomy in 1953. Situated along Panama's northeastern coast bordering the Caribbean, the Kuna territory includes much of the 3,200 square kilometers of San Blas County. The Kuna Yala Indigenous Reserve is inhabited primarily by 34,000 Kuna, with two Afro-Latin and settler communities of 500 people. Approximately 80 percent of the Kuna territory is covered in largely undisturbed primary forest, including 350 coral islands along the coast. According to tropical forest ecologists, the two massive continental ecosystems of North and South America overlap in this region, resulting in an extensive species diversity.

The Kunas' land is of great cultural and economic importance to the tribe's fifty communities. The Kuna practice long rotational agriculture along the coast and river borders. Bananas, maize, yucca, mango, avocado, and cocoa are grown for subsistence and coconuts exchanged through coastal shipping trade. The upper forests provide food, construction materials, medicines, and other raw materials. In one area of the Kuna reserve seventy-two agroforestry combinations are found, including forty-eight species of trees and sixteen crop plants.⁹ Protection of the Kuna forests, which are adjacent to several national parks, helps conserve one of the largest forest reserves in Meso-America. Historically, the Kuna have protected the primary forests *nieg serret*, some areas, cannot be touched or altered in any way because they are believed to be the sacred home of the spirits. According to one report, "The dense tropical forest cover of Kuna Yala contrasts sharply with the denuded hillsides in the immedi-



FIGURE 6 Indigenous Peoples and Natural Forests of Panama



ately adjacent province of Panama, where the increasing deforestation by slash and burn agriculturalists followed by the introduction of cattle is rapidly degrading the natural resource base."¹⁰

The construction of access roads adjacent to Kuna Yala attracts thousands of settlers in search of land for agriculture and commercial interests. The Kuna General Congress, which administers the area, is constantly under pressure from expanding commercial plantations, mining, ranching, and tourist enterprises that obtain permits to operate in the area from the national government. The Kuna are now confronted by the planned extension of the Pan American Highway, which would link Panama and Colombia and cut right through the homelands of the Kuna, Embera, and Wounaan peoples, overwhelming the area with migrant settlers and commercial speculators.

The Kuna want to conserve their threatened forests and protect their culture. In 1976, the Kuna attempted to establish agricultural buffer communities on the southern part of their territory where encroachment was most serious. Due to the steep poor soils of the area, however, farming was not viable and an alternative strategy emerged to focus on conservation and protection.

Outside assistance has tended to rely on technical concepts and research stressing biophysical studies, with less attention to social, cultural, and political issues surrounding resource management concerns. Environmental education efforts carried out through the Kuna Wildlands Project (PEMASKY) adopted Western methodologies instead of taking advantage of the Kunas' cultural resources and their traditional teaching methods. Many Kuna have concerns regarding PEMASKY's interests in commercial timber development in the territory. Whether the Kuna General Congress will have the political power to control such management decisions remains to be seen.

One important component of the PEMASKY project has been the physical demarcation of reserve boundaries. Prior to the establishment of the reserve, the government had inadvertently ceded some lands to non-Kuna families within the reserve. Kuna cartographers spent two years providing proper mapping information to the government to clarify boundaries, which have since been approved by the Ministry of Government and Justice. Gerales Hernandez, one of the Kuna mapping coordinators, was unable to hold back tears in explaining what the project meant to him: "It was an extraordinary experience, but as long as the rights of indigenous peoples go unrespected, there will be no peace in the country."¹¹

Full legal title to the lands, combined with support from a number of international organizations and foundations, has strengthened the Kunas' political organization. Based on regular village meetings, as well as traditional tribal congresses, management decisions and strategies evolve through participatory democratic processes. The Panamanian government's recognition of the indigenous Kuna system of governance and its treatment as a political province has provided important legitimacy to traditional institutions and decision-making processes. The Kuna have established a system of well-

defined boundary trails, maintain regular patrols, and have their own technical specialists for implementing plans and administering the reserve.

Future Challenges. Many challenges continue to confront the Kunas' attempts to protect their ancestral homeland and its unique forest and aquatic environment. To strengthen their political base the Kuna have sought to develop ties with other indigenous groups and local communities, as well as international organizations. Ultimately, the Kuna and other Panamanian indigenous communities seek greater authority and autonomy over their forest areas. They require increased funding and technical information to integrate with their own traditional knowledge to allow them to make informed decisions. A proposal by the Kuna General Congress for UNESCO recognition of Kuna Yala Biospheric County will establish an important international precedent. Despite continuing challenges and outside threats, the Kuna Yala continue to protect some of the richest forest in Central America, providing important lessons for Panama and other nations.

Strengthening Community Forest Management in Ghana

Ghana is committed to increasing the involvement of individuals and communities in the protection and management of forest resources. Exciting field experiences are shaping emerging government community forest policies. After several decades of struggling with controls over illegal timber felling, the Forest Department of Ghana is stabilizing these valuable resources by establishing partnerships with local communities.

Ghana is a largely rural West African nation of just over 16 million people. Ecologically the country can be broadly divided into a high forest and savanna woodland zone (see Figure 7). Ghana's forests have historically been the domain of the nation's tribal communities. In the high forest zones bordering the Atlantic Ocean, Akan-speaking tribes managed these rich forests under communal landholding systems. Each corporate tribal group administered the lands under traditional authorities, usually a "stool" occupied by a chief on behalf of his people. The "stool" symbolizes the souls of the ancestors who originally possessed the land and represents a trust for current and future generations. Many small forest patches were given special protection by communities as sacred groves.

In 1909, the Forest Department of the Gold Coast Colony was established, but the ultimate title to the high forest zone remained with the traditional landholding tribal groups ("stools"). Over the past century, however, the government vested the Forest Department with the right to manage all timber and allocate concessions on behalf of the communities. The government is now exploring ways to bring communities more effectively into management decision-making.

Commercial logging began in Ghana in the early 1880s, but it was the arrival of cocoa in the

1830s that most drastically altered the nation's forest cover. While making land available for cocoa drove forest clearing for the establishment of plantations, the need for higher forest canopy trees to create a suitable microclimate for the crop encouraged conservation measures. To ensure forest cover, large tracts of high forest were designated reserves, with existing rights to forest products remaining with traditional owners. Large areas outside the reserves were cleared for cocoa, but sufficient trees were retained to provide shade for the crop.

These conservationist policies began changing with the outbreak of World War II. Commercial timber exploitation rapidly gained importance. By 1959, heavy private-sector logging had replaced earlier Forest Department emphasis on maintaining forests. Farmers, concerned about their forest-dependent cocoa system, were often anti-timber, while the foresters were increasingly viewed as pro-concessionaire. After achieving independence from Britain in 1957, Ghana continued to implement forestry plans emphasizing timber production and revenue generation for development needs. By 1985, satellite images were revealing that while the reserve forest boundaries were still intact, 32 percent of the reserve was degraded.

As noted, the reserve remained under the ultimate authority of the traditional "stools," but under the 1962 Concessions Act the government was vested with rights to manage all timber and allocate concessions on their behalf. Farmers, however, had no rights to protect the trees on their land from loggers. By 1993, timber harvesting off-reserve was reaching alarming levels as the timber industry expanded. Opportunistic contractors operated illegally in response to an aggressive new Far Eastern logging market. Forest policies from the early 1960s that allowed concessionaires to salvage fell in advance of the expanding cocoa plantation frontier were still in effect, even though most of the remaining timber trees were on farms or in sacred groves. Old antagonisms between farmers and concessionaires worsened. One farmer reported:

In the past farmers made a lot of efforts to tend trees on their farmlands . . . even where farmers engaged hired laborers they told them to protect the young trees if weeding on a cocoa farm . . . Then you wake up one day to find the very tree you tended has been logged and your crops destroyed.

In recent years the need to restore a balance between national and industrial interests and the resource rights and requirements of rural communities has become imperative. The situation was of great concern to the Forestry Department, as the Chief Conservator of Forests at the time stated: "We need the support of the local people, and yet they are the very people who are disillusioned with us."

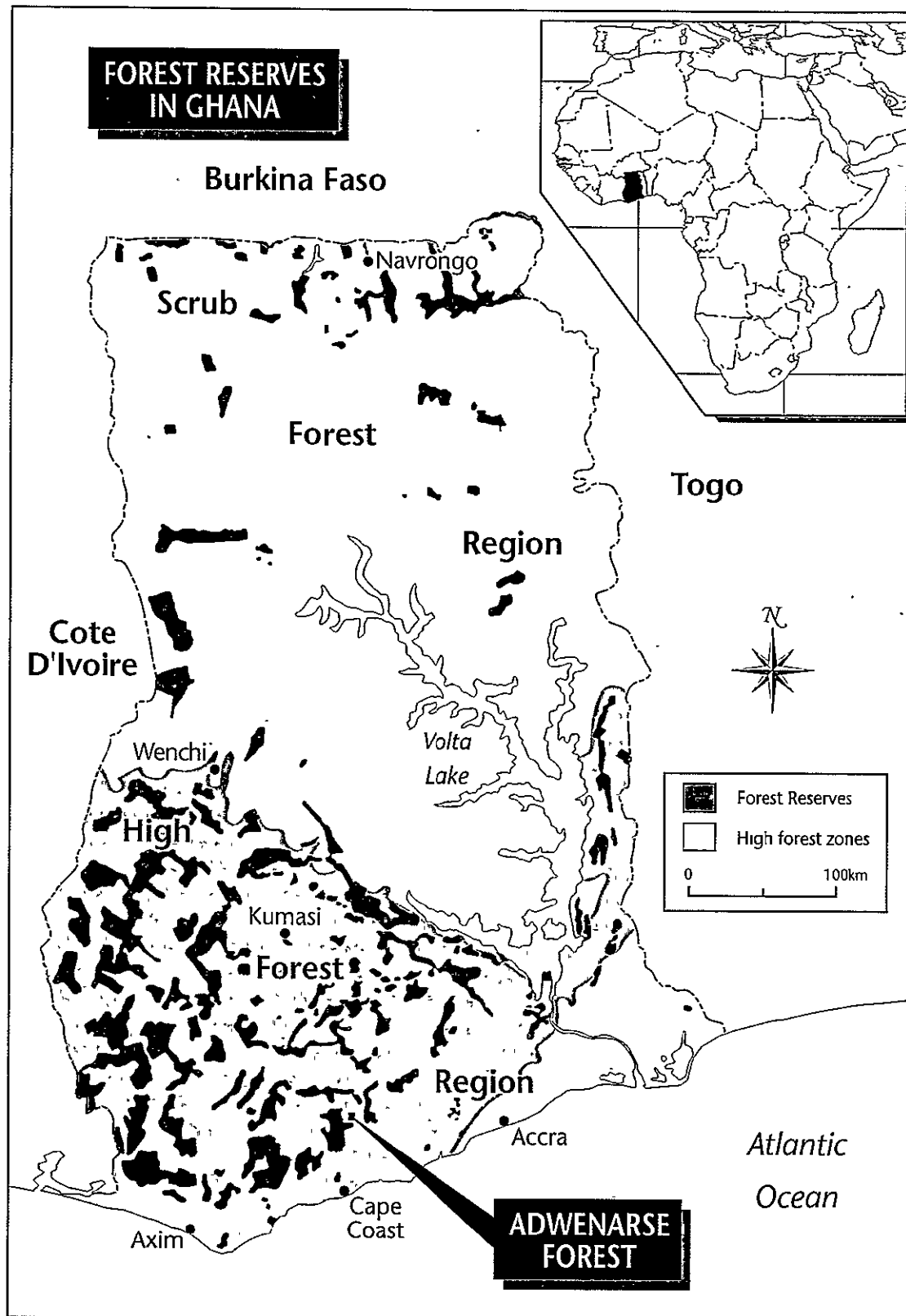
In 1994, the Forest and Wildlife Policy was passed to support local forest management initiatives outside reserves. It sought to encourage local community initiatives to protect natural resources for traditional, domestic and economic purposes, and to support with the reservation of such lands their legal protection, management and sustainable development.

Community Management of Forest Patches Outside Reserves. Outside the reserves there are numerous patches of forest ranging in size from thirty to several hundred hectares. While small in comparison to the reserves, these patches are locally important for forest products, environmental functions, and cultural values. One such area is Adwenaase Forest in the Central Region. The forest is owned by the people of Assin Akropong. This 200-hectare tract was set aside many generations ago by the chiefs and elders of Assin Akropong as an ancestral grove. The forest marks the site of the first settlement of the ancestors which was later allowed to revert to forest. Historically, cultural taboos preserved the grove, allowing limited collection of forest products, including mahogany. However, in 1993 local elites began logging and farming the forest patch. Concerned community members sought the help of the Forestry Department to stop the logging. Local interest in protecting the forest was fueled by a strong sense of communal ownership, the leadership of village elders, environmental concerns, and anger at being cheated out of communal revenues by a few individuals. With the assistance of the District Forest Office during the next two years elders and community volunteers demarcated, surveyed, and mapped the forest. The use rights of settlements around the forest were defined and management goals outlined in the 1995 management plan for Adwenaase Community Forest Reserve. They included:

- Generating income for community development from timber, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and tourism.
- Providing all communities free access to NTFPs for domestic needs.
- Establishing forest harvesting rules and records.
- Protecting the environment to provide rain, windbreaks, clean air, and animal habitats; prevent erosion; and ensure clean, abundant water supplies.
- Ensuring future generations can learn about the historical, cultural, and ecological aspects of the forest.
- Teaching other communities to manage their forests.

During the forest management planning stage, the community faced the difficult task of deciding how to regulate the forest access of its 4,000 members without degrading the resource. As the community acquired better planning tools to complement its local organization, impressive programs began emerging. The chiefs and elders, as custodians of the land, will oversee the forestry programs, designating specific roles and responsibilities for the Forestry Department. While progress has been made in building agreements between the community and the Forestry Departments, old problems remain. Some community members still distrust the Forestry Department, fearing "the Government will deceive us to claim ownership of the land." Yet new patterns of cooperation are evolving.

FIGURE 5 High Forests and Savanna Woodlands of Ghana



Under the new Forest Act and building upon the Assin Akropong experience, the Forestry Department has created a management category called Dedicated Forests. Dedicated Forests will include lands committed to forest use for a period by the holder of land rights, and they will cover community forests such as Adwenaase, village woodlots, monkey sanctuaries, and teak plantations. Community-managed forests could be endorsed and supported by the Forestry Department, allowing access to the proposed National Reforestation Fund.

Community Management in Large Forest Reserves. Collaboration also has great potential in the management of Ghana's forest reserves. Legislative and procedural changes are being prepared to ensure more equitable returns to communities holding title to the reserves. Restoring communal rights in management decision-making will ensure improved consultation with stakeholding communities, greater security to subsistence forest products, and a larger community share of forest revenues. Forest fringe communities will also be more closely involved in NTFP management, rehabilitation, protected area management, and fire prevention. Preliminary guidelines on local involvement in reserve management are in preparation.

In Ghana, over the past three years the rights and roles of communities in forest management have been greatly strengthened. Past policies that resulted in antagonistic and unproductive relations among rural communities, concessionaires, and foresters are being dismantled. The Forestry Department is learning how to facilitate collaboration in different resource contexts, including timber production areas, plantations, hill sanctuaries, sacred groves, and farming systems. The 1996 Forestry Development Master Plan envisages that collaborative approaches will be integrated into management in all high forest districts within the next five years.

Summary

The case studies from Panama, India, Canada, Ghana, and Nepal document a long history of community forest management. Yet local populations have been increasingly marginalized in formal forest-use decision-making in past decades as state agencies have attempted to take greater control over forest resources. The shortcomings of the experiment in bureaucratic management are evident at the close of the twentieth century. In the case study countries, planners, foresters, and communities are now seeking ways to restore the role of local stakeholders and their institutions as custodians of forest resources.

In many parts of the world communities continue to feel that their forests are threatened by timber companies, government agencies, and outside interests. While grassroots efforts to conserve endangered forests are encouraging, many fledgling attempts, lacking clear empowering policies and supportive structures, are in danger of collapse. In India's Tangi area, while over 120 villages initiated forest protection, nearly one-third have become inactive due to internal conflicts and outside pressures.

In Panama, the Kuna Yala people continue to feel threatened by plans to develop roads, extend mining and logging leases, and develop tourism in their indigenous reserve. Aboriginal peoples of Canada still face a long process of negotiations in reaching formal treaty agreements with provincial and national governments. New community forest management policies emerging in Nepal and Ghana will require years before they are fully implemented.

Forestry agencies in a growing number of nations are giving community management greater attention. Yet old traditions change slowly. Many foresters and planners remain skeptical regarding the role communities can play. Vested interests often resist policy shifts that would move forest control from government and private-sector concerns to local groups. Even as policies require forest departments to give greater opportunities and authority to villagers and indigenous populations, agency capacities to establish stronger communication and coordination linkages with informal users remain limited.

If a worldwide move toward decentralized, participatory management of the public forest domain is to succeed in the first decades of the twenty-first century, a strong political commitment and substantial allocation of resources will be needed. International organizations, bilateral donors, and other concerned institutions will need greater coordination of effort, more sharing of learning, and the establishment of operational mechanisms to support and accelerate the highly decentralized efforts of rural people. Transitions to more equitable, sustainable management of the planet's forests must take place in a period of continuing population expansion and economic growth. The task is formidable, but as the case studies indicate, momentum is growing in remote rural areas. The international community, which has expressed a strong commitment to these goals in Agenda 21, must find ways to support the concerted efforts of millions of rural people to stabilize an environment essential to their survival and the security of their nations.

V RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE IUCN WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN FOREST MANAGEMENT TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS

Program Elements

I.1 Progress Through National Forest and Land-Use Plans

- Community forest management systems should be an integral part of national forest plans. International agreements and donor programs supporting this sector should reflect the importance of integrating forest-dependent communities into the planning process.
- Forest planning systems should be adapted to reflect existing trends toward greater community involvement and support agency transitions currently underway in many countries.
- A broader spectrum of forest-dependent groups and indigenous communities should be represented in forest planning. Planning systems need to facilitate a process that identifies and involves primary users and other forest user groups in meaningful decision-making regarding protection and management goals and operations affecting state forest lands in their proximity.
- Participatory planning with forest communities must distinguish between primary users of the forest and other relevant actors. Primary users, those who directly depend on the forest for their livelihood and sustenance, and/or who have traditional or customary rights to the forest, must have the right to make, implement, and monitor forest plans in consultation with other relevant actors deriving benefit from the forest.
- Planning and resource allocation procedures for state forests should not compromise the existing rights of forest-dependent people and communities.
- High priority areas should be identified through national and local planning systems which indicate existing and conducive environments for community management. Identifying characteristics may include areas which have a high economic importance of forests for local communities, existence of indigenous systems of forest control and use; expressed interest of community leadership and local NGOs, forest experiencing medium to high disturbance pressures and degradation, and forests with good natural regeneration potential.

- **Communication linkages** should be established between government agencies and user groups that exist below the lowest levels of government administrative systems. Such user groups are often the social unit most closely engaged in forest management. Rural women and low income households, often most heavily dependent on forest resources, need a much greater voice in management decision making.
- **National policies and programs** should be developed to provide sustainable forest management options to communities, providing them alternatives to the sale of local forest resources to private timber companies for short-term economic benefits.

I.2 Addressing the Underlying Causes of Deforestation

- **Reestablishing community control over forest access** may be instrumental in many contexts to stabilize resources, given that the legal disenfranchisement of local communities from many of the world's forest lands has been an underlying cause of deforestation. Strengthening community forest-use rights and responsibilities through supportive policies and programs would enhance community initiatives to protect forests against degradation.
- **Ground-level management activities** are often best implemented by communities living in or near the forest. Effective controls over felling, grazing, hunting, and fires are fundamental elements for continuing productive use. Use regulations are often best applied by primary users living in the area who possess long-term goals supportive of sustainable forest management based on sociocultural and ecological values, as well as on economic needs.
- **Policies and programs that address these underlying causes** of deforestation by enabling forest-dependent groups to play a greater role in the protection and management of state forest lands should be encouraged and supported.
- **An integrated approach to both the policy and field operations** is needed to strengthen the tenurial rights and responsibilities of communities for neighboring public forest lands. A variety of legal mechanisms, planning tools, and management systems should be developed in conjunction to reflect historic rights, environmental conditions, and emerging community management goals.

I.3 Building on Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge

- **Traditional and forest related knowledge** should be broadly defined to include institutional, authority, and governance structures, cultural belief and value systems, land and resource use systems, and conflict resolution and mediation processes.
- **It is necessary to develop policies and programs that recognize customary or traditional** systems of forest management by forest-dependent communities as integral systems and that support these approaches for the management of state forest lands. Governments should develop means to interface effectively with traditional systems of resource management.
- **Traditional resource use systems deserve government recognition** and support in their own right as critical elements in sustaining the livelihood of hundreds of millions of people, not only in partnership with public or private sector initiatives.
- **Traditional forest-related knowledge and broader community-based forest management** systems should not only be viewed as potential sources of commercially valuable new products, but as a fundamental approach to stabilizing the world's forests and the greater ecosystems that forests support.
- **Mapping of traditional forest territories, registration of user groups, and collaborative agreements** should be used to reestablish and strengthen community actions for sustainable forest management. Policies should be developed which reinforce community tenure rights to forest resources.

I.4 Experiences with Afforestation, Reforestation, and Restoration of Forests

- **Bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies and government planners** should be encouraged to redirect ODA to more effective means of forest restoration. Greater emphasis should be placed on moving investments away from high cost plantations towards supporting natural regeneration of forest cover for a diverse range of forest products and to restore environmental services.
- **Natural regeneration under community protection** should be recognized as a low cost, higher success rate alternative to plantation establishment. While plantations remain a valid alternative, when combined with community managed forest regeneration, even allowing for multiple crops, costs come down drastically allowing for more comprehensive

forest coverage. Natural regeneration also allows for a more diverse range of forest product flows, often of greater value to local community groups.

- **Social fencing based on community management agreements** is often effective in halting forest disturbance. Once felling, grazing, fires, and other disturbances are controlled, degraded forests can enter into a succession pattern which can be manipulated to enhance forest productivity and meet other management goals.

II Donor Assistance and Technology Transfer

- **Emphasize community-sourced financing** as a fundamental strategy to respond to the need for sustainable resource mobilization to enhance forest productivity. National governments should be encouraged to establish supportive policy and programmatic mechanisms and instruments to enable local communities to invest in forest development.
- **Supporting community forest management** as a fundamental process of policy and procedural reform, rather than as isolated projects, should be incorporated into donor strategies. Donors should place greater emphasis on assisting government agencies to build new communication channels with communities, and also create processes to facilitate the negotiation of new collaborative management agreements.
- **Agency staff training and research needs** increased attention in donor forestry programs to develop management systems which are responsive to local economic and environmental needs.
- **Local forest management rights** and responsibilities require greater clarification in donor-assistance programs as a critical first step in involving community groups.
- **Flexible funding** should be provided by donors to support social and institutional change. Donors should establish flexible budgets to engage community groups, NGOs, university researchers, and local consultants for diagnostic studies and regional and sectoral background assessments. Project design teams should involve local community leaders, NGOs and researchers knowledgeable about local environments, field conditions, and opportunities for community forest management.
- **Improved national and regional exchange mechanisms** should be developed to facilitate and accelerate learning among donors assisting community forest management programs.

IV. Trade and Environment Referring to Forest Products and Services

- **Community-based processing and marketing of wood and non-timber forest products** require support and encouragement. External trade policies should not at the expense of community rights over state forest lands.
- **Mechanisms for leasing and auctioning state forest resources** should be structured to reflect community ability to handle organizational and fiscal procedures. Community participation should be facilitated by setting capital investment requirements at levels within the reach of forest-dependent people.

V.1 International Organizations and Multilateral Institutions and Instruments

- We urge the IPF to recommend that an instrument be established to monitor the relationship between deforestation patterns and social-institutional and political changes at the national level. Such a global monitoring program could be undertaken without creation of new bodies but rather develop from existing networks, particularly regional ones such as those facilitated by the FAO, the IUCN, the ODI, the Asia Forest Network, the Latin American Forest Network, the African Forest Action Network and other organizations. The program would examine both changing national policy environments and local grassroots initiatives and their impact on forest cover.
- Such actions could help to reinforce the political will of nations and guide their efforts to formulate innovative and enabling national policies that create new partnerships between forest dependent communities, private sector interests and government agencies. Learning arising from exchanges and interactions between such strategic programs could help to reveal common concerns and opportunities and provide direction to global dialogues.

VI LONGTERM STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN FOREST MANAGEMENT

Through the IUCN, a working group has emerged to raise awareness at the international level of the roles that communities play in many places around the world in the sustainable management of forests. Within the context of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, the working group on Community Involvement in Forest Management has met to formulate recommendations for action and for a long term strategy to examine and evaluate how changing social and policy actions are affecting global deforestation trends. One of the outcomes of the Working Group's discussions has been the formation of a proposal to establish a global program linking existing community forestry networks to create a process for exchange of experiences and cross-fertilization of ideas while providing the members of the working group with an opportunity to compare national policy environments and local grassroots initiatives to manage forests.

Goals

- Establish two-way linkages and exchanges to accelerate a process of learning between nations and across regions.
- Channel lessons of successful field practices and effective national policies to global and national forest dialogues and processes and ensure that outputs from these fora are supportive of CIFM.
- Support long-term transitions in management of the public forest domain toward the decentralization of rights and responsibilities for management to forest-dependent communities and indigenous peoples.
- Influence donor investment strategies to be more supportive of community forest management transitions.

Strategies

- Develop linkages that support exchanges between nations regarding the rich experiences of the World's peoples in dealing with the problems of deforestation and emerging strategies to resolve them.
- Analyze community forestry strategies as a multi-nation group to identify common issues and effective actions that can inform international fora dealing with global forest policy.
- Track emerging plans for future international negotiations and target opportunities to influence them early in their agenda formulation as well as during the meetings themselves.

Structure

Network Pool. The primary activity in promoting the process of exchange of information and experiences would be to establish stronger linkages between existing national and regional networks, country

working groups, and other donor and international organizations. Existing networks that could participate might include those organized by the FAO, the IUCN, the ODI, the Asia Forest Network, the Latin American Forest Network, the African Forest Action Network and other organizations. In addition, national forestry working groups, including those operating in the Philippines, India, Nepal, Bolivia, Peru, Costa Rica and other countries could play an important role.

Working Group. To sustain and expand the IUCN Working Group comprised of individuals actively engaged with community forestry issues and to facilitate their interactions, it is proposed that the Working Group be a standing body that would meet periodically during a three year term. The Working Group would pool local and national experiences and draw common elements to formulate positions to communicate in international discussions. To facilitate the exchanges at regional levels and speed communication at inter-regional levels, Regional Focal Points will be identified from among the Working Group members. These regional focal points will be developed from existing networks where possible. Periodic meetings would facilitate this process, as well as to establish cooperative exchange visits between countries and regions. Initial meetings of the Working Group would focus on building a comparative set of information on emerging policy developments, forestry agency transitions, and local community forest management initiatives. The Working Group would also agree on an annual plan of action.

Advisory Body. To support the continuity of the process, an advisory body of selected Working Group members, funding agencies and key staff from international organizations involved in the planning of international forestry meetings would be established. The Advisory Body would secure sources of funding for Working Group activities, and identify opportunities to feed country experiences into appropriate international discussions on global forest policies.

Secretariat. To develop and implement the proposed Working Group Strategy and act as a nodal hub for communication and cross-nation and inter-regional synthesis a small secretariat facilitated by IUCN would be formed. The Secretariat would arrange Working Group meetings, cross-visits between group members, and take responsibility for the preparation and dissemination of reports and documents generated by the Working Group.

Mechanisms

Documentation. Working Group members would create comparative documentation of national and field-level reports bearing on community and forest agency experiences in transforming policies and operational procedures, including institutional mechanisms within forest departments and communities, tenurial arrangement, resource management technologies and systems, and their impact on vegetative change.

Synthesis. Working Group members would synthesize local and national experiences, identifying common problems and promising strategies, which need to be reflected in international discussions. Analysis of common issues and problems confronted by communities and forestry agencies during management transitions would be identified by working group members during their periodic meetings.

Communication. Working Group members would communicate their learning regarding experiences in other countries and regions to policy makers in their own nations and in international policy fora. Regular updates and newsletters would be used to inform Working Group members. The Working Group, through the secretariat would publish a series of working papers on country level experiences

and would distribute them to the participating member organizations. Email communications and conferences and the establishment of a web-site would be used to better link members and facilitate interactions.

Topics

Articulating the Global Resurgence of Community Forest Management. The Working Group would describe, document, and analyze the broader patterns of change emerging in national forest management systems as they shift from the conventional centralized modalities of bureaucratic control to respond to primary user community needs and initiatives. The analysis would provide insight into the broader patterns and processes emerging in participating nations, where communities are reclaiming their historical patterns of forest use, despite different stages of transition and contextual variations. This effort would provide a clearer vision of current and future global trends and management transformations affecting the forest sector.

Comparing National Community Forest Protection Movements and Emerging Policy Trends. The Working Group would record and compare transitions in approaches to forest management including changing national political environments and policy shifts, forest agency transitions patterns, changes in community perceptions and roles in forest management, and the cumulative effects of these forces on the condition of natural forests. This analysis would help identify indicators and benchmarks useful in defining the process of change and in monitoring the devolution of forest management responsibilities to community groups.

Identifying Enabling and Constraining Elements to Forest Management Transitions. The Working Group would assess the site specific experiences at the country and regional level to identify policy, socio-political, and economic factors that either facilitate or constrain the fuller expression of community rights and responsibilities in state forest lands management. This analysis would help to segregate positive and negative elements influencing the development of policy and operational mechanisms at national and regional levels.

Assessing the Roles of the Local, National, and Transnational Private Sectors in Community Forest Management. The Working Group would endeavor to define the role that the private sector should play in order to be compatible with the imperatives of the needs of forest-based primary user communities and the emerging management systems. For example, what kind of guidelines should be established for multi-national investment and for local level investment in forest resources that affect local forest user communities.

Developing Tools and Strategies for Facilitating Community Forest Management Transitions. The Working Group would exchange experience with national strategies to encourage policy and agency reforms supportive of community involvement in forest-management. National working groups and specific tools and techniques including social mapping, public hearings, and other diagnostic tools and social processes for communicating community needs and initiatives to policy makers would be the focus of this activity.

APPENDIX I - THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS AND ITS AGENDA

The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) will take just under two years to build consensus on what set of actions the global community ought to take to sustainably manage and conserve all types of forests and whether a new international forest convention will be necessary. The Panel on Forests will meet four times: IPF1 was held 11-15 September 1995 in New York; IPF2 was held 11-22 March 1996 in Geneva, IPF3 was held in Geneva 9-20 September 1996; the IPF4 is scheduled for New York 11-22 February 1997. At its conclusion in March 1997, the IPF will make recommendations to the Fifth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the UN General Assembly to determine what further global forest policy initiatives need to be supported or created.

The Panel itself is supported by a small Secretariate headed by Jagmohan Maini and Joke Waller Hunter within the UN Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and has selected three co-chairs: Sir Martin Holdgate-UK, N.R. Krishnan-India, Manuel Rodriguez Becerra-Columbia, and two vice-chairs: Juste Boussienguet-Gabon, Anatoliy Pisarenko-Russia. All 53 state members of the CSD are welcome as members of the IPF while states which are not CSD members, UN accredited NGOs, international organizations, and private sector representatives are welcome as participant observers. The IPF agenda is divided into five clusters of issues which in turn are broken into 11 programme elements, each to be more substantively discussed at one or more of the IPF sessions with final consensus to be reached by the end of IPF4.

IPF Work Programme Element	IPF Session For Substantive Discussion
I PROGRESS SINCE UNCED	
Progress with implementation of UNCED Decisions; Sectoral and Cross Sectoral Linkages	
I.1 National Forest Plans	
Progress through national forest and land use plans including ecosystem management and lessons learned from participatory approaches	IPF3, 9-20 Sept. '96 IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97
I.2 Causes of Deforestation	
Addressing underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation; Difficulties in implementing sustainable forest management and establishing cross sectoral linkages	IPF2, 11-22 March '96 IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97
I.3 Traditional Forest Knowledge	
Means for the protection, use and equitable benefit sharing arising from the use of traditional forest related knowledge; Direct linkage to the CBD's third objective regarding equitable benefit sharing of genetic resources	IPF3, 9-20 Sept. '96 IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97
I.4 Forest Restoration	
Experiences with afforestation, reforestation and restoration of forests especially of arid fragile ecosystems and forests impacted by air born pollutants	IPF2, 11-22 March '96 IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97

I.5 Low Forest Cover Countries

Studying the need of countries with low forest cover with attention to unique types of forests

IPF2, 11-22 March '96
IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97

II DONOR ASSISTANCE AND TECHNOLOGY

International cooperation and coordination of donor assistance; transfer and development of environmentally sound technologies

IPF2, 11-22 March '96
IPF3, 9-20 Sept. '96
IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97

III SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, FOREST ASSESSMENT, CRITERIA AND INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABILITY

III.1 Forest Assessment, Valuation & Accounting

Expanding FAO Global Forest Resource Assessment, Valuing the multiple benefits of forests; Progress in application of national accounting for forests

IPF2, 11-22 March '96
IPF3, 9-20 Sept. '96
IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97

III.2 Criteria & Indicators of Sustainability

Experiences, further development, and comparability of national criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management

IPF3, 9-20 Sept. '96
IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97

IV TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT/CERTIFICATION

Factors affecting forest products trade and improving nondiscriminatory market access, pricing, import export tariffs, subsidies, full cost internalization methods; Voluntary certification and labeling of forest products

IPF3, 9-20 Sept. '96
IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97

V INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND APPROPRIATE INSTRUMENTS

V.1 Overview of Existing Arrangements

Overview and assessment of linkages, overlaps and gaps of existing international organizations, multilateral institutions and legal instruments related to forests

IPF3, 9-20 Sept. '96
IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97

V.2 Options for the Future

Options for further action including assessment of need for new appropriate forest legal and institutional arrangements

IPF4, 11-22 Feb. '97

Notes

- ¹ Gilbert F. White, "Emerging Issues in Global Environmental Policy," *Ambio* 25, (February 1996): 58–60.
- ² Dan Ritchie, *A Strategy for Asian Forestry Development*, Washington, D.C. : 1992 World Bank.
- ³ Margaret Skutsch, contribution to the FAO Email Conference on Collaborative Forest Management, 18 March 1996.
- ⁴ Section 6, Forest Policy of 1952, as cited in Mark Poffenberger and Betsy McGean, eds., *Village Voices, Forest Choices*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 1996.
- ⁵ Adapted from "Villages, Forests and Foresters" by D.A. Gilmour and R.J. Fisher.
- ⁶ Lorraine Brooke, "Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," History Workshop, unpublished discussion paper as cited in Peter Poole, *Indigenous Peoples, Mapping and Biodiversity Conservation*, BSP Peoples and Forest Program, Discussion Paper Series, 1995.
- ⁷ Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Province of British Columbia, "Interim Measure Agreement on Clayoquot Sound Signed," News Release, March 19, 1994, p1.
- ⁸ Peter Utting, "The Social Origins and Impact of Deforestation in Central America," United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (Geneva: 1991), pp. 18–20, discussion paper 24.
- ⁹ Brian Houseal, et al., "Indigenous Cultures and Protected Areas in Central America," Cultural Survival, 9,1 (February 1985).
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 16.
- ¹¹ Derek Denniston, "Defending the Land with Maps," World Watch, January/February 1994, p. 30.

IUCN - The World Conservation Union

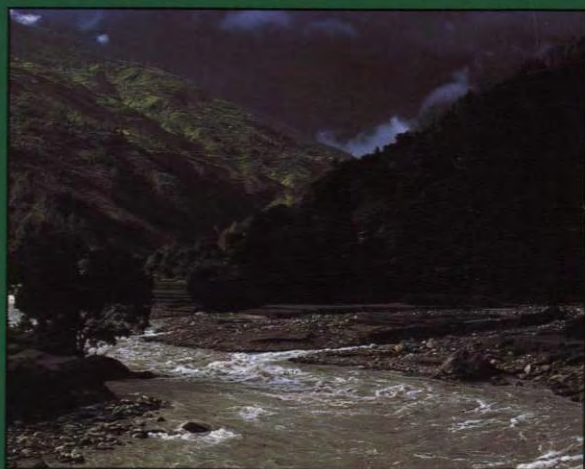
Founded in 1948, The World Conservation Union brings together States, government agencies, and a diverse range of nongovernmental organizations in a unique world partnership: over 800 members in all, spread across some 125 countries.

As a union, IUCN seeks to influence, encourage, and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. A central secretariat coordinates the IUCN Program and serves the Union membership, representing their views on the world stage and providing them with the strategies, services, scientific knowledge, and technical support they need to achieve their goals. Through its six Commissions, IUCN draws together over 6,000 expert volunteers in project teams and action groups, focusing in particular on species and biodiversity conservation and the management of habitats and natural resources. The Union has helped many countries to prepare National Conservation Strategies and demonstrates the application of its knowledge through the field projects it supervises. Operations are increasingly decentralized and are carried forward by an expanding network of regional and country offices, located principally in developing countries.

The World Conservation Union builds on the strengths of its members, networks, and partners to enhance their capacity and to support global alliances to safeguard natural resources at local, regional, and global levels.

At right: Sixty-one percent of Nepal's forest have been targeted for community management to protect critical watersheds like this and meet local needs.

On the cover, clockwise from top left: naturally regenerating secondary forest in East Kalimantan, Indonesia; Hmong children collecting cinnamon bark in the Da River Watershed, Vietnam; Peruvian Indians loading fuelwood from their community managed plantation forest; Banjara and Jat villagers identifying community protected forests in the Shivalik Hills of Northern India.



IUCN
The World Conservation Union